



PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

Traditional abuse prevention education has focused on training children to recognize 'bad touch' and to use the 'NO, GO, TELL' strategy. Studies have shown that this approach has been fairly ineffective in preventing abuse and only slightly effective in encouraging children to 'TELL.' This is because child molesters are experts in gaining access to children, and then proceeding with their subtle process of isolation and manipulation. Children are usually unable to recognize the sophisticated 'grooming' techniques that pedophiles use to gain their cooperation. We can no longer assume that children will be able to protect themselves or be able to tell anyone about their abuse. Parents themselves must take primary responsibility for their child's safety and take on a more pro-active role in their protection.



Some signs and symptoms that a child is being abused include abrupt changes in behavior ranging from extreme modesty to engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviors. Physical symptoms can include genital pain, itching, or bleeding, as well as other physical complaints like stomach or headaches. Sleep disturbances, bed wetting, unexplained fears or refusals to go certain places or be with certain people might be red flags as well. Some children who are being abused engage in 'escape' behavior such as running away, drug or alcohol use, or isolating themselves from others.

Prevention starts with parents and community members becoming educated.

Some suggestions for protecting children include:

- Tell your child specifically where on their body they should not be touched or touch others.
- Talk to your child about the ways someone might try to 'trick' them into going along with 'secret touching.'
- Make sure your child knows that you want them to tell you immediately if something should happen and they will not be in trouble no matter what anyone else may tell them.
- Have 'safety talks' with your children several times a year. Don't rely solely on training they receive at school.
- Tell children about the possibility of encountering sex offenders in the community and on the Internet.
- Protect your home computer from pornography by using an ISP (Internet Service Provider) that offers screening for obscenity and porn.
- Be wary of older children or adults who want to spend a lot of time alone with your child.
- Trust your intuition. If you feel something is not right in your child's relationships, act on it.
- Watch for symptoms of abuse and know that it may take repeated attempts with lots of reassurance to encourage children to speak out.

Information on this flyer was derived from http://www.womensafety.org/pics/sexabuse_brochure.pdf

For further information please call the Sanford Police Department Crime Prevention Unit at 407.688.5070 ext. 6008